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Friday, 13 January 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Ishikane (Japan)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The war in Ukraine is approaching its one-year anniversary, with no end in sight to the fighting or the suffering. Throughout the holiday season, the forces of the Russian Federation continued their strikes on key Ukrainian cities. Too many Ukrainians spent what is normally a festive period in bomb shelters. Far from celebrating, countless families across the country were mourning the loss of loved ones.

On the morning of 29 December, Russian forces launched more Ukraine-wide attacks, targeting regions including Dnipro, Kherson, Kivohrad and Kyiv. Multiple strikes were reported in the cities of Kharkiv, Odesa, Lviv and Zhytomyr, as well as Kyiv. Two days later, on New Year's Eve, all of Ukraine's administrative regions were again under air raid warnings.

The attacks have continued in the new year, despite the announcement of a possible cessation of hostilities over Orthodox Christmas, a holy period for both Russians and Ukrainians. On 6 January, an emergency worker was killed in an attack on a fire station in the city of Kherson. The next day, several regions in the east and south of Ukraine were shelled. Ground fighting has intensified, especially in the Donetsk region. In areas of active hostilities, such as Bakhmut and Soledar,

relentless battles, including street fighting, pose a great threat to the remaining civilian population.

In Bakhmut alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has documented 22 civilians killed and 72 injured since early December. Following the most recent fighting, OHCHR has verified 18,096 civilian casualties since Russia's invasion of 24 February 2022. That total includes 6,952 people killed and 11,144 injured. The actual figures are likely considerably higher.

The war has forced millions of people to flee their homes. We commend the generosity of the countries hosting approximately 7.9 million people who sought protection in Europe. We encourage further efforts to ensure equitable access to rights and services for refugees in national systems. Approximately 5.91 million people in Ukraine, 65 per cent of them women and girls, are internally displaced. Fuelling the displacement is the purposeful, systematic targeting of critical civilian infrastructure, including energy and health-care facilities.

Following a request from Ukraine to the Secretary-General, the United Nations Development Programme launched a sector-specific damage assessment, in collaboration with the World Bank. The assessment, which aims at identifying the most critical needs for the restoration of damaged energy infrastructure, is currently under way, with 90 per cent of the data collection completed.

The number of recorded attacks on health-care facilities last year was the highest in the world. There were 745 incidents as of 4 January. In the most affected regions in the east and south of the country, reportedly 15 per cent of facilities are either partially or completely non-functional, and up to 50 per cent in Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv.

Inevitably, the war is also leaving invisible scars. According to the World Health Organization, nearly a quarter of the population is reportedly at risk of developing a mental health condition because of the war. The destruction and closing of schools will also have a lasting impact on children and young people. An estimated 5.7 million school-aged children have been directly affected, including 3.6 million due to the closure of educational institutions early on in the conflict.

In recent months, aid organizations have continued efforts to expand life-saving operations to previously inaccessible areas, including in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions. As of 5 January, humanitarian partners had provided food to almost 9 million people. The same number of people have received critical health-care support across the country. Around 7.3 million people have been assisted with access to clean water and hygiene products. Over 3 million people uprooted by the war or those whose houses have been damaged have received emergency shelter or critical household items.

In response to the energy crisis, humanitarian partners have distributed hundreds of generators to make sure critical services, such as hospitals and schools, as well centres hosting those displaced, can continue operating. In all, since 24 February 2022, almost 14 million people have received assistance from over 740 partners. That includes 1 million people in areas not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. But the humanitarian response is hampered by severe access constraints, particularly in areas in the east under Russian control. In line with international humanitarian law, parties must facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for all civilians in need.

OHCHR continues to document allegations of grave human rights violations and to support efforts towards accountability. Since 24 February, OHCHR has documented over 90 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, which fall into two main categories — the majority as a method of torture and ill-treatment in detention, predominantly affecting men; and sexual violence involving rape, including gang rape, of women and girls in areas under Russian control. It is imperative that all perpetrators of human rights violations be held accountable.

On the question of accountability, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court continues its work in Ukraine, where it has maintained a presence since May 2022. As the Prosecutor has indicated in his briefings to the Council, the alleged targeting of civilian objects and the unlawful transfer and deportation of civilians, including children, from Ukraine to the Russian Federation, are the investigative priorities of his Office.

On a positive note, we welcome the ongoing contacts and commitment of the parties to continue exchanges of prisoners of war, most recently on Sunday

involving 50 Ukrainian and 50 Russian captives. We are also encouraged by the meeting hosted in Türkiye on 11 January between the Russian and Ukrainian ombudspersons on that issue.

Despite the challenging context, the Black Sea Grain Initiative continues to make a difference, including by helping bring global food prices down. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations now reports a continued decline in its Food Price Index. More than 17 million metric tons of foodstuffs have now been moved under the Initiative, reaching, or on the way to reaching, some 43 countries. Roughly 20 per cent of that total is for countries categorized by the World Bank as low-income or lower-middle-income economies.

The United Nations also continues its engagement with all stakeholders to remove remaining obstacles to Russian food and fertilizer exports, including ammonia. Those exports are key to keeping prices down and mitigating food insecurity, and we urge all concerned to work to that end.

As the Secretary-General has made clear, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. It has created a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe, traumatized a generation of children and accelerated the global food and energy crises. And yet that grave damage could pale in comparison with the consequences of a prolonged conflict.

I said at the outset of my statement that there is no sign of an end to the fighting. The logic that prevails is a military one, with very little, if any, room for dialogue right now. But all wars end, and so too will this one. Ukraine, Russia and the world cannot afford for this war to continue. The Secretary-General is ready to assist the parties to end this senseless, unjustified conflict on the basis of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The President: I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for yet another in-depth briefing on the situation in Ukraine.

A year has passed, and the situation in Ukraine is no different. Three hundred and twenty-three days of an ongoing unjust and unjustified war have resulted in

devastating damage to the population and the country's physical, economic and human infrastructure. Thousands of civilians have been killed. Approximately 8 million have become refugees. A large part of the population is suffering from psychological trauma. Despite worldwide condemnation and rejection, despite the huge toll on human lives, despite everything, Russia continues on its course.

Civilians and their families in Ukraine have been — and are — enduring escalating devastation. Children continue to be killed, wounded and deeply traumatized by the violence all around them. Endless individual dramas tell the larger story. Take the story of Yaroslav, a 13-year-old boy who was awaiting the New Year with his family in Nadniprianske when their home came under Russian fire. Seriously wounded, he was taken to a hospital in Kherson. But in the first few minutes of 2023, the Russian army shelled the hospital, and Yaroslav was evacuated to another hospital, in Mykolaiv, where doctors continue to fight for his life, hopefully with success in this case. How many others — children, boys and girls — have seen their destiny at the mercy of a war they do not want and do not understand?

Among myriad disasters inflicted upon Ukraine there is one that is as particularly striking as it is painful: there are no more children left in Ukraine. I am not speaking about those who have been killed without getting to understand the world they were born into. I am not speaking about those who were forced to leave everything behind to flee a war inflicted by those claiming to be their brothers. And I am not speaking about those tens of thousands deported and given for adoption to strangers in Russia. No, I am speaking about those premature adults of little age in Ukraine; those who have been forced to grow up years in a matter of months; those forced to face killing tanks rather than playing with toy soldiers; those who cannot attend school because they have been destroyed; those who cannot sleep from fear of a missile falling on their roofs and those who have no more tears left to cry for their misery.

Since the very first day of this war, we and the absolute majority in the Organization have made a fundamental distinction: Russia is the aggressor State; Ukraine is fighting to defend itself, for its survival. Russia is wrong and nothing can, or will ever, change that, and no propaganda machine has been able to alter it. The Ukrainian army and people have defied all

expectations. We applaud their heroic resistance and military brilliance in the face of a brutal invasion. That is why it has been, and remains, crucial to help Ukrainians to defend themselves and prevail in restoring their sovereignty and securing their borders — because any other result will only increase the Kremlin's appetite.

Let us not forget that only eight years separated Russia's seizure of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine. Those who believe they are on a messianic mission to restore fallen empires will not stop if they are not stopped; they will just wait until their next move. The world needs Ukraine within its borders to save the world order from the current and future transgressors of commonly agreed rules. Ukraine has been able to show the world the strength of right against the illusions of might. In this conflict, it is the courage and resilience of Ukrainians that represent the hope for a life in peace for all of us.

Since February of last year, the course of the war has forced Russia multiple times to define down its military goals. Russia abandoned the Kyiv area because it was forced out. Kremlin officials declared that "Russia is in Kherson forever", but then was forced out. All the ground lost in 2022 was not the result of any tactical retreat, but of outright defeat. The Kremlin has not changed its goals; it has been contained and stopped.

That is why it is important to continue to support Ukraine by providing political, military, financial and humanitarian support and assistance. Ukrainian heroes fighting for freedom — for all of us and for what we believe in and stand for — need and deserve modern weapons to push back their invader. That is even more evident given the realities on the ground.

For months, we have seen more and more a war of rage, widescale bloodshed and attrition. As rightly recalled, Soledar, pounded for months and where nothing is left standing, now resembles Mariupol, a hallmark of absolute insanity. Reporters speak of a meatgrinder, where the Wagner Group uses human lives as cannon fodder.

It has become a pattern: every time Russia has stalled and has had difficulty on the ground, it has deliberately targeted critical infrastructure, in particular Ukraine's electricity distribution grid and power-generation capacity — which, by the way, is a blatant war crime — including thanks to the extensive use of Iranian drones, acquired illegally in breach of

resolution 2231 (2015), on which we still await clarity from the Secretariat.

Russia has tried to force Ukraine into submission. It has failed. Ukrainians may be without electricity, a water supply and heating, but they have a heart, a fighting heart for their country, for their freedom and for the right to be themselves. But let us not forget that, sooner or later, those responsible for the crimes committed will have to face up to their acts and pay for their actions.

Like every other war, this one will end one day. It should have never started in the first place, but it is never too late to stop it. Unrealistic and insincere calls for talks while wreaking havoc on the country, killing its civilians and annexing its territory by force will lead nowhere. The crimes committed against Ukrainian civilians, the rapes and murders, the scale of the destruction, the sacrifices and the number of deaths and the persistent imperialist madness have not broken Ukraine. And we all know it. They have only strengthened the resolve of Ukrainians to defend themselves and bar the way to aggressor.

For any meaningful and credible diplomatic path to materialize, Russia must first withdraw its troops from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. That could lead to an outcome.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing, and First Deputy Foreign Minister Dzhaparova for joining us today.

On 1 January, as the rest of us were celebrating and welcoming the New Year, the people of Ukraine endured three straight nights of Russian missiles and drone strikes against their cities. Those attacks were barbaric. They destroyed systems that provide heat and light to the Ukrainian people during the coldest, darkest part of winter. They are not the actions of a country ready to give up on war.

The New Year offers us, along with our new colleagues on the Security Council, an opportunity to reflect on the past year. Let us start by reminding ourselves of the mandate of this organ. The Security Council is the primary body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. That is a serious, solemn duty. The Charter of the United Nations and the peace it strives to achieve is in our hands; it is in our care.

Last January, we feared that peace was at risk. Twelve months ago, the United States first warned of troubling signs that Russia was planning a massive, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As Russia amassed troops along the Ukrainian border, including in Belarus, we rang alarm bells and pursued every diplomatic avenue possible to prevent war.

In January 2022, we convened urgent meetings, including at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the NATO-Russia Council and the bilateral United States-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue. Our goal was for all sides to resolve their concerns through dialogue and diplomacy. But Russia chose a different path. President Putin chose to strike at the heart of the United Nations Charter. In fact, he chose war at the exact moment that we were working in the Council to keep the peace.

Today we are all feeling the direct and spillover effects of this senseless war. For example, Russia's war in Ukraine has dramatically exacerbated the global food crisis. The World Food Programme estimates that more than 345 million people are suffering from, or at risk of, acute food insecurity. Acute: that means they are in imminent danger of dying. Three hundred forty-five million people — that is more than double the number in 2019.

Russia's attacks and continued blocking of some Ukrainian ports have decreased Ukraine's food exports by approximately 30 per cent. And we thank Türkiye and the Secretary-General for helping to broker the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which has been critical to feeding the world's hungry. But here is the truth: the Initiative's operations are not keeping pace with the strong global demand for Black Sea grain. Due to Russia's deliberate slowdown of inspections, dozens of ships are waiting to depart, and dozens more are waiting for inspections before they can bring their grain cargo to the world.

That backlog means extra expense and extra delay for millions of tons of grain, a majority of which is destined for developing countries. The backlog means 2.5 million tons of grain is just sitting there, waiting to move, and farmers in Ukraine are waiting to plant. Some ships have been waiting for over a month. Grain is moving at just half the rate of the pace back in September and October. The Initiative should operate as it was envisioned, moving 5 million tons of food per month. The world's hungry deserve nothing less.

Today I ask members of the Council to join us in urging Russia to scale up cooperation immediately.

As we work to contain the ripple effect of Russia's war, we must also be laser-focused on the horrors happening on the ground in Ukraine. Last week, *The New York Times* detailed harrowing accounts from the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General's office of well-documented cases of sexual violence committed against women, men and children by Russian Federation forces. I strongly encourage everyone at this table and listening here today to read that report. The details are too awful, too sickening, for me to recount here today. Of course, we do not only have to rely on *The New York Times*; the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry has documented numerous reported cases of sexual violence and torture.

Just as when we warned the Council last January that Russia was planning a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we also warned the Council more recently that Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea planned to transfer prohibited materiel to Russia. They have. Since August, Iran has transferred hundreds of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia, in violation of resolution 2231 (2015). Russia has been using those Iranian UAVs to strike Ukraine's energy infrastructure, depriving millions of Ukrainian civilians of electricity, heat and critical services in the middle of winter. People in Ukraine today are suffering and dying as a result of Iran's support.

We believe Iran is now considering the sale of hundreds of ballistic missiles to Russia, also in violation of Council resolutions. We urge Iran to reverse course and not to take those steps. And we urge everyone who supports peace to ask Iran to do the same.

Meanwhile, officials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said publicly that they would not support Russia's war in Ukraine. But they have since delivered arms to the Wagner Group in direct violation of Security Council resolutions. Last month, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delivered infantry rockets and missiles into Russia for use by the Russian Federation-backed Wagner Group in violation of the Council's sanctions resolution. And we are concerned that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is planning to deliver more military equipment to the Wagner Group.

We condemn the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and urge the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea to cease those deliveries and come into compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. And once again we encourage everyone to join us in that call.

As we start this new year, the world is tired of war. The people of Ukraine, who have suffered so much, crave a return to a normal life. Now is the time for all countries to stand together and demand that Russia end this senseless war. We must come together in defence of the Charter of the United Nations and its most fundamental principles. We must come together to achieve a just and secure peace, consistent with the Charter.

Let us continue to do everything in our power to contain the ripple effects of Russia's actions, to help those who are suffering both in Ukraine and outside its borders, and hold accountable everyone who violates international law and supports this illegal, immoral war.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

Since this is the first opportunity for my delegation to refer to this central issue in the Security Council, I would like to underscore that, since the beginning of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, Ecuador has decisively condemned it. This aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and has no place in an international order based on the rule of law, as stated by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Holguín Maldonado, in the Security Council open debate yesterday (see S/PV.9241). In accordance with the principles of our foreign policy and our vocation as a peaceful nation, we do not and will not recognize the acquisition of territory by force.

We express our support to Secretary-General António Guterres for the efforts to achieve peace in this conflict — one of the most complex challenges — and any other that involves one of the permanent members of the Security Council.

Ecuador regrets the partial application of Article 27, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, which established the veto, but also the obligation of the parties to a dispute to abstain from voting.

I also highlight resolution 2623 (2022), by which the members of the Security Council decided to convene the eleventh emergency special session of the General Assembly, which allowed the Members of this Organization to express themselves decisively.

My delegation recalls the statement by the President of the Security Council of 6 May 2022 (S/PRST/2022/3) in which this very organ was united in expressing its deep concern for the maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine and recognized that, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, “[a]ll Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means” (Article 2, paragraph 3). The Security Council and its members must honour that statement. We therefore call for an end to the invasion, which is now approaching its one-year anniversary, and we urge the Council to consider ways to immediately suspend the hostilities and restore peace and security in Ukraine, based on respect for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Ecuador is ready to support any initiative that promotes political dialogue and diplomacy and that would also bury the spectre of the nuclear threat.

Ecuador deplores the recent escalation of attacks and bombings in Ukraine that is causing a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation, which is worsened by the bombings targeting critical infrastructure that have decimated access to basic services. Furthermore, we are concerned about the risks of accidents and incidents at nuclear power plants. In that regard, we reiterate our full support for the International Atomic Energy Agency and the need to facilitate its work, including on the ground, in a safe and unhindered manner.

Attacks on energy infrastructure, housing, hospitals and various education facilities especially affect vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. Moreover, the power outages caused by those attacks add to the suffering faced by the Ukrainian population in the midst of a cold winter. Those attacks also violate resolution 2573 (2021) on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, which was adopted in April 2021. We emphatically call for the cessation of attacks against civilians and unconditional respect for international humanitarian law.

This conflict, which is inflicting pain and destruction on the people of Ukraine, has changed

the dynamics of the Security Council and has had disastrous consequences that have aggravated food insecurity in the world. In that regard, we call for the broadening and deepening of initiatives such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

I remind the Security Council that in just the first month of the military aggression against Ukraine, Ecuador had to evacuate nearly 700 Ecuadorian citizens, in particular students, by means of several humanitarian flights.

Finally, in the humanitarian context, Ecuador recognizes the leadership and efforts carried out during 2022 by France and Mexico, the latter having concluded its valuable work at the end of December. For this reason, Ecuador will work closely with France to continue promoting the humanitarian issue in the Security Council.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): Mozambique wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her useful and comprehensive briefing. We welcome the participation at this meeting of other delegations, in particular Her Excellency Ms. Emine Dzhaparova, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, in the company of our colleague, His Excellency Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations.

In his final address of the year at the end of December, Secretary-General António Guterres expressed his cautious hope that the year 2023 would bring an end to this conflict. It was a hope that we then wholeheartedly embraced. We note, however, that after almost a year of armed conflict, the war shows little sign of abating. The conflict appears to be threading a narrow path of escalation, as we have heard in the Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo’s briefing.

We are deeply concerned that Europe, a continent at the origin of two tragic world wars and the epicentre of a long cold war, is again plunging the world into a gloomy situation of fear and a food crisis. We are in this Chamber to encourage that ways of a negotiated solution to the conflict be explored. We have a genuine interest in peace and security worldwide as a global common good.

We wish to remind ourselves that the concept of collective security — that the security of one is the security of all — was at the centre of the creation of the United Nations. It is a concept enshrined in the

Charter and cherished by all peace-loving nations. In that regard, we can only welcome the efforts of this body to address the issue.

Mozambique holds the view that there should be an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to direct negotiations between the belligerent parties. Those negotiations should be conducted in good faith by both parties in the spirit of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

We defend that humanitarian work be given a high priority, in accordance with the relevant rules of international humanitarian law and practices of humanity.

We see the need for and importance of shoring up the platform that led to the Black Sea Grain Initiative with the support of the Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance. In that context, we encourage the Secretary-General to continue devoting his efforts, with our support, and his moral authority to the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her sober assessment of the situation. I would also like to acknowledge the participation at this meeting of the Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Poland, Her Excellency Ms. Emine Dzhaparova and His Excellency Mr. Wojciech Gerwel, respectively, as well as that of the representatives of the other delegations.

For the people of Kyiv and many other regions of Ukraine, this year began as the last one ended: with a large wave of Russian air attacks. At the same time, fierce fighting continues, especially in eastern Ukraine. Our thoughts are with the people suffering from this war, wherever they are in the world.

Russia's large-scale military aggression against Ukraine is a serious violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. Switzerland strongly condemns this violation and fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We call upon Russia to immediately de-escalate the situation, cease all combat operations and withdraw its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine, including the areas declared as annexed, without delay. As the occupying Power, Russia must respect its obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights

law. Switzerland calls for rapid and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to the entire territory of Ukraine, including the areas occupied by Russia. We also condemn the involvement of Belarus in the Russian military aggression.

In an armed conflict, civilians pay a high price. Their protection is a humanitarian imperative. Switzerland stresses that all parties must ensure the protection of the civilian population as well as of persons *hors de combat*, and respect international humanitarian law and human rights. Since February 2022, thousands of civilians in Ukraine have died or been injured. The Ukrainian population has been and is still being subjected to horrific situations, including acts that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has determined constitute war crimes and human rights violations. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes, the vast majority of whom are women and children. They have often been exposed to high risks, such as human trafficking and sexual violence.

In addition, in recent months, there have been recurring Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Without electricity, the functioning of essential services such as hospitals and water supply systems has been hampered.

In view of what I just mentioned, today I reiterate Switzerland's call for a halt to all attacks on civilians and persons *hors de combat*, on civilian property and on essential infrastructure.

We must take a step forward towards peaceful, just and lasting solutions. That includes a commitment to diplomatic solutions, making progress in the reconstruction process, actions for accountability and victims' rights, and a redoubling of efforts for nuclear safety and security.

We must not forget that this war has consequences far beyond the European continent. The burden of more expensive food, uncertain energy supply and the threat of a nuclear incident weighs on the whole world. We share the Secretary-General's conviction:

"This is not a time to sit on the sidelines; it is a time for resolve, determination, and — yes — even hope."

Switzerland supports the good offices of the Secretary-General and his unwavering commitment to peace, including as host State in Geneva.

We will continue to provide humanitarian aid in Ukraine, for example by supplying mobile heating devices. We support justice for victims, including promoting the documentation and investigation of crimes committed against them. And we are committed to a participatory and transparent reconstruction process under Ukrainian leadership, as set out in the Lugano Principles.

Last year, war returned to Europe with full force. As members of the Security Council, we have the responsibility to do our utmost to ensure that this year is marked by a just peace, in accordance with international law, in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

For almost a year, with bravery and determination, Ukraine has been resisting the Russian aggression unleashed in violation of international law and the United Nations Charter. Russia had bet on the rapid collapse of the Ukrainian army and authorities. Eleven months later, the offensive on Kyiv have been repulsed, and the Kharkiv region and the city of Kherson have been liberated.

With each Ukrainian victory on the ground, Russia reacts in a cowardly manner by bombing civilian infrastructure. These strikes have a clear objective: to terrorize civilians and break the morale of the Ukrainian people. The Kremlin's unilateral announcement of a ceasefire, which Russia and its proxies have not respected, is further proof of its cynicism.

The Russian strikes violate the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and international criminal law. These acts constitute war crimes, and they will not go unpunished. France will continue to stand by the Ukrainian courts and the International Criminal Court.

While its ammunition stocks are dwindling and it is in great difficulty on the ground, Russia is seeking to obtain supplies by all means, including by violating Security Council resolutions. For example, it makes extensive use of drones supplied by Iran. The United Nations must investigate these transfers, which violate resolution 2231 (2015), and report its findings to the Security Council. To compensate for its many losses, Russia also does not hesitate to mobilize Wagner Group mercenaries, which include many criminals.

The Russian aggression is having devastating consequences for global food security, which is being used by Russia as a weapon of war and an instrument of blackmail. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has proved to be effective in lowering food prices and allowing food to reach those who need it most. Several million tons of wheat have been exported, most of it to non-European countries. We expect Russia to ensure the full implementation of this agreement.

We also welcome the concrete initiatives taken by Ukraine. France is providing assistance through the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission initiative and the European solidarity corridors.

By continuing its headlong rush forward and increasing the number of acts of violence, Russia is repeatedly showing that it does not want peace. It bears sole responsibility for the continuation of hostilities. Through the 10-point peace plan proposed by President Zelenskyy, Ukraine, for its part, is tracing a path towards a just and lasting peace. This will not be possible without a total withdrawal of Russian troops from all Ukrainian territory. That is the only way to end the suffering of the Ukrainian people, who are courageously fighting for their freedom.

In that context, France will continue to provide the Ukrainian people with the support they need to exercise their right to self-defence and preserve their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In his New Year's message, Secretary-General Guterres stated that in 2023 we need peace now more than ever. Helping Ukraine and the European region restore peace and stability is an unshirkable responsibility of the international community, and of the Security Council in particular. It is also a goal that we should redouble our efforts to achieve in the new year.

I wish to make the following four observations. First, conditions for dialogue and negotiations must be created. The current situation in Ukraine is the result of the long-term accumulation and continuous evolution of deep-seated security imbalances in Europe. Only when the parties concerned overcome their differences and sit down at the negotiating table can we find the fundamental solution to end the war and rebuild the European security architecture.

The path of peace talks is not a smooth one, but as long as we do not give up on our efforts and demonstrate

political determination and wisdom, starting from small, practical things and gradually building up from there, the prospect of peace will always be within reach. The international community, in particular countries with major influence on the current situation, should encourage Russia and Ukraine to engage in dialogue and help open the door to a political solution to the crisis. Escalating sanctions or providing weapons will only make it more difficult to turn the situation around and may even provoke larger-scale confrontations, thus exacerbating and prolonging the conflict, which must be avoided at all costs.

Secondly, no effort must be spared in alleviating the humanitarian crisis. The ongoing conflict and the cold winter have added to the humanitarian needs. Many people have to face the reality of shelling, lack of water and electricity, and family separation, while ushering in the new year. Parties to the conflict should effectively uphold international humanitarian law, take measures to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure from attacks, and make every effort to reduce the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Continued international humanitarian assistance is indispensable to helping conflict-affected people survive the winter. It is imperative to help Ukraine repair damaged energy infrastructure as soon as possible so that people can survive the winter and so that a larger-scale humanitarian crisis can be avoided.

Russia's 36-hour ceasefire over Orthodox Christmas allowed people to spend the holiday in peace and provided favourable conditions for the humanitarian agencies to deliver their supplies, which should be welcomed. We hope in future there will be more similar ceasefire initiatives, so as to create conditions for a comprehensive ceasefire.

Thirdly, nuclear-security risks need to be eliminated. The shelling around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant has not ceased, and its safety and security has been a source of concern. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), all six reactors at the plant are down, and the last backup power line to guarantee the plant safety and security functions was damaged by shelling at the end of December, with power transmission resumed only last week. This should not happen again, and all military operations that could affect the safety and security of the nuclear power plant should be stopped immediately.

China supports the IAEA in its continuous communication with Russia and Ukraine on the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable and viable arrangement at an early date.

Fourthly, the spillover effects of the crisis need to be contained. The coronavirus disease pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and other crises are reinforcing each other, with devastating impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Developing countries are suffering from increasingly high inflation and debt burdens, and, in the last year alone, the number of people suffering from extreme poverty and severe hunger increased by several million.

It should be noted that this is not simply about production and demand, and that the disruption of the global industrial chain and supply chains by unilateral sanctions cannot be ignored. Major developed countries should adopt responsible economic, monetary and trade policies to avoid negative spillover effects that exacerbate the economic and livelihood difficulties of developing countries, not to mention using the world economy as a political tool or weapon, thereby undermining the hard-won momentum of recovery.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative has brought hope to people with hunger. China welcomes the continued implementation of the Initiative and encourages the United Nations Secretariat to make practical efforts to remove the obstacles to the export of Russian food and fertilizer.

The crisis in Ukraine has once again brought the world to a crossroads, as President Xi Jinping stated, whether to revert to the cold war mentality, unprovoked division and confrontation, or to proceed from the common welfare of humankind and uphold equality, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. This is a test of the wisdom of the international community and the reason of humankind. Facts have proved that conflict, confrontation, containment and decoupling are against the trend of the times and therefore are doomed to failure, while peace, development, win-win arrangements and cooperation are in line with the expectations of people and are the prevailing trend of the times.

At the beginning of the new year, all parties should take new actions to actively open up new prospects for peace. China will continue to uphold an objective and impartial position and make constructive efforts in its own way.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I welcome the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Ms. Dzhaparova, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gerwel, as well as the representatives of Lithuania and European Union, to today's meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her detailed and comprehensive briefing, which unfortunately confirms prevailing sombre expectations. We are sorry to hear once again that there are no prospects for opening peace negotiations, while the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate and the number of civilian casualties increases every day.

Brazil understands that initiatives such as the temporary ceasefire during Orthodox Christmas could pave the way for the resumption of dialogue. It is heartbreaking to see that, even in such moments, it is impossible to reach an agreement, and yet another opportunity to build peace has been lost.

We urge the parties to break this senseless dynamic. At the same time, we expect all countries directly or indirectly involved to start showing genuine interest in a dialogue for achieving peace. The exclusive pursuit of military solutions will inevitably stoke long-lasting resentments and a post-conflict situation of fragility and instability.

We regret the disbanding of the Fact-Finding Mission set up by the United Nations to investigate the incident of 29 July 2022 in Olenivka, even before it was able to begin its work. Impartial scrutiny is essential to contain the proliferation of false narratives and prevent such atrocities from happening again. We encourage the parties to increase efforts to ensure the security of future missions of this nature and the Secretary-General to reconsider the decision.

Brazil reiterates its commitment to the preservation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to a political solution to the conflict that takes into account legitimate security concerns. We also reiterate the call for the well-being of the civilian population on both sides of the front line to be everyone's priority. We welcome Türkiye's renewed mediation efforts and encourage other members of the United Nations to engage in initiatives that will allow for the prompt cessation of hostilities, in order to abbreviate the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her comprehensive briefing on the security and

humanitarian situations in Ukraine. Ghana appreciates and remains fully supportive of the crucial work of the different United Nations agencies aimed at addressing the several crises generated by the war.

Ten months of the Russian Federation's war on Ukraine has left many in fear of the great upheaval that lies ahead unless the war is brought to end sooner rather than later. We remain deeply concerned that belligerency appears to prevail over a reasonable approach, requiring a move away from the battle front and for the warring parties to resolve their dispute through dialogue. The prevailing conditions in Ukraine reinforce the critical need for the international community to intensify efforts towards a pacific settlement of the conflict.

Despite the echoing calls by members of the Security Council and the international community, the Russian Federation's actions have demonstrated an unending disregard for the obligations of international law prohibiting the use of force as it engages in an intense fight to capture the city of Soledar and many other parts of the country.

The multiple impacts of the war on the lives of Ukrainians, especially women and children, are tragic, to say the least. The destruction to civilian and critical energy infrastructure is monumental and requires extensive resources to be restored, where possible. We are particularly concerned by recent escalatory rhetoric and posturing, which carry the risk of a possible spillover of hostilities that could set the stage for a wider war, given existing global geopolitical fissures.

While Ukraine has been the centre-stage of combat, the war has also deepened tensions in the inter-State relations between some of the most powerful nations and has elicited responses ranging from the imposition of sanctions to the provision of military assistance to Ukraine.

We must also note the continuing impact of the unfolding war on the world economy. The food, energy and financial crises provoked by the war have caused many developing countries to experience receding economies and heightened chances of instability.

International peace and security are under threat from the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Security Council must therefore strengthen peace efforts by drawing on the tools for pacific settlement provided under the Charter of the United Nations. We are of the view that the Council must begin to consider a clear-cut process

involving the parties and all other relevant stakeholders. Such an effort would require the good-faith commitment of all members of the Council and must be aimed at finding pragmatic and mutually acceptable solutions grounded in the rules of international law and the avowed values of the Charter of the United Nations. It is most pressing for the Security Council to find common ground upon which it can accelerate action for peace in Ukraine.

As the body mandated to promote and maintain international peace and security, the Security Council shares a collective burden to restore peace to Ukraine and its people. We must, however, point out that a lot depends on the will of the Russian Federation to abate its violations of the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We therefore reiterate our call for an end to this war by the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Russian Federation forces from the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. We are firmly of the view that dialogue and diplomacy offer the most viable paths to address the security and other concerns of the parties in a comprehensive and mutually acceptable manner.

We continue to be disheartened by the humanitarian suffering experienced by the people as a result of the war. Each day the war persists, innocent people pay the price with their lives and livelihoods. Millions of people have been displaced from their homes, with little hope of returning to find them in place. To date, close to 7,000 deaths and more than 111,000 injuries, including of children, have been recorded.

Most regrettably, humanitarian workers have also fallen victim to the war. The deliberate attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers are unacceptable and constitute violations under international humanitarian law. We condemn all such actions and call on the parties to comply with their international obligations and to grant humanitarian access to all impacted areas.

We condemn all abuses and violations of human rights arising from the war and reiterate our call for thorough, transparent and independent investigations into all such reports. We note with regret that the United Nations fact-finding mission that was to investigate the killing of prisoners in Olenivka has had to be disbanded for safety reasons. Despite setbacks, we must maintain our collective commitment to ensure accountability for all war crimes and to avoid impunity in Ukraine.

With regard to nuclear safety and security, we wish to underscore the absolute importance for the parties to take preventive measures, including the delineation of a demilitarized zone around the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant and the other nuclear facilities in the country. We urge the International Atomic Energy Agency, in its engagements with parties, to also address the concerns regarding the physical and mental well-being of the staff at the Zaporizhzhya power plant.

Finally, let me express Ghana's unwavering support for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We stand ready to support the efforts of the Council and the wider international community in finding a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and, furthermore, to address the global challenges resulting from the war.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): To be frank, we do not fully understand why today's meeting was convened. Is it so we can listen to a briefing by Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo based on the so-called reliable information thoughtfully provided by so-called independent sources and independent commissions? Did we hear anything new from our former Western colleagues today? Did we hear anything that we have not heard repeated in various manners over the past year?

There is a novel titled *Vanity Fair*, written by British author William Thackeray, who is widely known in Russia. Meetings on Ukraine that have been convened by our former Western partners increasingly remind us of a "Hypocrisy Fair", where the hypocrisy of the representatives of the collective West and the Kyiv regime is assuming the oddest forms.

For example, our Ukrainian neighbours, who recently threatened us with terrible punishment and almost threatened to launch an offensive against Moscow, have today put on the garb of peacemakers. That is what we took away from yesterday's meeting from the remarks of Ms. Dzhaparova (see S/PV.9241) and, before that, from the initiatives of her boss, Mr. Kuleba. Now Ukraine is running around brandishing the idea of some sort of a peace summit, implying in every way that it is Russia that wants no peace. Clearly, that is an attempt to strike a chord with a Western audience, which is asking increasingly inconvenient questions about how Kyiv spends its allotted money and about why Ukraine is rejecting all realistic mediation initiatives.

At first glance, it seems that Kyiv is holding out an olive branch. What could be nobler? However, even with the most cursory examination, it becomes clear that, behind that lovely facade, there is a rotten inside and even a hidden agenda. Kyiv does not conceal that Ukrainian peace means the capitulation of Russia, which must be endorsed by the international community. That is why, when making that shallow propagandist proposal for peace, Mr. Kuleba voiced that Russia is not expected to take part in such a summit.

The much-vaunted Zelenskyy peace initiative that our Western colleagues fell over one another to praise follows the same hypocritical and inherently flawed logic. For anyone who believed, even for a minute, in the peaceful intentions of the Ukrainian dictator, I would like to remind them that, on 30 September, Ukraine legislatively ruled out the very possibility of dialogue with our country. Through Decree No. 679, Zelenskyy literally “noted the impossibility of conducting negotiations with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin”. That legislative provocation cannot be explained, other than by the intention of Kyiv and Western sponsors to continue fighting until the last Ukrainian.

By the way, it is difficult to shed the impression that the Kyiv regime and its most ardent sponsors have completely forgotten the meaning of the word “peace”. It is no accident that the European Union is financing arms deliveries to Kyiv through the European Peace Facility, without even considering how abominable that sounds.

The Ukrainian authorities once again revealed their true — and far from peaceful — colours in March 2022, when it revoked its own realistic elements for a peace deal that we were ready to discuss. Whether Kyiv made that fateful step by itself or was heeding the instructions of its sponsors in London, Washington, D.C., and Brussels, is not that important now. What is important is that precisely then the Kyiv regime — despite facts and common sense to the contrary — embraced the illusion that with the increasing direct military assistance of NATO, Ukraine would be able to defeat Russia on the battlefield. Ukraine’s dictator still sticks to that dangerous delusion, even though many Western leaders have adopted a more sober view of the situation.

Ukraine has basically turned into NATO’s private military company. Ukraine is provided money, weapons and intelligence data and is told what to target and

where to attack. It is the people of Ukraine, who are forced to fight for someone else’s objectives, are the ones who suffer. That was acknowledged yesterday by the Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Mr. Reznikov, who said:

“We are carrying out NATO’s mission without shedding their blood. We shed our blood. That is why the West should give us more money and weapons”.

That is the formula of a NATO war by proxy “to the last Ukrainian”. It cannot be described any better. It also discloses the cynical confirmation of the true premise behind any Ukrainian so-called peace initiatives.

I am sure that after my statement many colleagues will ask the legitimate question: what will it take for peace to prevail in Ukraine? That is a legitimate question, especially now that the Kyiv regime and its Western sponsors are trying to convince everyone that the goal of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine is to destroy Ukraine as a State, almost to de-Ukrainize it and to force its Russification. We never declared such goals.

It is important to understand that we are not fighting against the Ukrainian people. We are fighting against the criminal nationalist regime, which came to power in 2014 as a result of a Western-supported anti-constitutional coup and resolved to remove from Ukraine everything that is related to Russia and to glorify Nazi collaborators. That felonious policy resulted in an 8-year-long deadly war on the inhabitants of Donbas who opposed the new Government. Putting an end to that war was the main goal of our special military operation.

For the people of the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics, the war has been going on for the entirety of those eight years. As far as how the population of that region survived under fire then and now, and what the people of the Donbas wanted and how they tried to achieve it, we intend to tell everyone about that next Friday under an Arria Formula meeting. We believe that all States, first and foremost the new members of the Council and everyone interested in this topic, will find that meeting very useful, as it will provide first-hand accounts by eyewitnesses, foreign journalists and researchers who were there.

Everything could have ended differently for Ukraine had Kyiv implemented the Minsk agreements endorsed

in resolution 2202 (2015). However, that did not fit with the plans of Zelenskyy or his predecessors or — as we now know thanks to the revelations of Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande — those of France and Germany as guarantor countries. Furthermore, we learned that the Minsk process served only as a smokescreen for the West, behind which it was secretly arming Ukraine in order to push it into a conflict with Russia.

The beginning of the special military operation in February 2022 undermined those plans. The goal was to ensure that no threat could emanate from Ukrainian territory for Russia and that discrimination against Russian-speaking Ukrainians would end. If that result can be achieved through negotiations, we are ready to engage. If not, then we will achieve it through military means.

To date, however, neither the Kyiv regime nor its Western sponsors have drawn the right conclusions from the Ukrainian disaster. What is more, with the tolerance of the collective West, the Zelenskyy regime has become an authoritarian dictatorship, which in itself is a significant obstacle to peace. More recently, in addition to persecuting dissidents and opposition leaders in Ukraine, we have seen an attempt to destroy the only canonical church in the country — the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. That could have very grave implications for regional peace and security, which is why we believe that this situation deserves close scrutiny by members of the Security Council. We therefore request the Japanese presidency to convene a separate Security Council meeting on this issue in the afternoon of 17 January.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing. I welcome the participation in this meeting of the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, our colleague the representative of Lithuania and the Head of the European Union delegation to the United Nations.

Since the most recent Security Council meeting on the war in Ukraine (see S/PV.9208), there has been no lull on the ground. There is no respite for the people. The harshness of the fighting in Soledar and Bakhmut is a matter of concern. The civilian population is being subjected to regular bombardments, caught in an unbearable vice for the control of every inch.

According to the latest United Nations statistics, this war has already produced more than 6 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine, nearly 5 million refugees, nearly 7,000 civilian deaths and more than 11,000 injuries. In addition, there are allegations of rape and sexual violence, infiltration, human trafficking, especially of children and women, including the disruption of schooling for children and psychological traumas that extend beyond the conflict.

The use of weapons of mass destruction, in particular drones and other explosive weapons with wide-area effects, as well as cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines, has greatly increased the toll of the war in Ukraine. Numerous attacks have targeted energy, health and water infrastructure, directly affecting the survival of civilian populations, forcing them to flee from the emergency and making more complex the delivery of humanitarian aid to millions in need. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has increased significantly as temperatures have fallen.

We commend the outstanding efforts of humanitarian organizations in Ukraine and in refugee-hosting countries to provide assistance in the form of food, cash, medical care, electricity generators, clean water and other basic services.

We call once again on the belligerents to respect their commitments under international humanitarian law and to refrain from using weapons whose indiscriminate effects inflict atrocious suffering on civilians.

As we approach the critical threshold of 12 months of relentless warfare, the rhetoric of excessive weaponry that seems to prevail on both sides bodes well for a hardening of the fighting. There is every reason to believe that the coming spring will be like this winter, a season of even more violent offensives.

It is time for the meetings of the Council to be considered as, and directed towards, a solution-oriented outcome. It is time now more than ever for the channels of diplomacy to be activated to end this deadly war.

My country calls on all parties to put all their energy into the search for a political solution in order to end the cycle of suffering and distress. We must use diplomacy and dialogue to end the war in Ukraine.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her sobering briefing. I recognize the participation of Her Excellency

Ms. Dzhaparova, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine.

The heralding of a new year has struck differently this year with the people of Ukraine due to the continuation of Russia's war of aggression. At the start of 2023 we must continue to prioritize the prolonged and intensifying nature of this illegal war, along with its consequences on Ukraine, its people, Europe and the rest of the world.

As we continue to witness the systematic targeting of critical infrastructure, particularly energy and water distribution systems, we condemn this evident weaponization of winter, to the severe detriment of the civilians in Ukraine. Those attacks have led to widespread blackouts and the disruption of essential services in Ukraine and constitute a violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the four Geneva Conventions and their protocols. We stress that international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be respected and upheld at all times, without exception.

The repercussions of this war on children must be highlighted. Attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools and transportation systems, coupled with displacement, are having a disproportionate impact on children, their education and their safety. Lack of access to basic services is depriving them of their fundamental rights, and that will lead to long-term consequences that will not be easily reversed. Furthermore, children have been forcibly moved to Russia, breaking family ties and placing children in vulnerable situations, while denying them the right to family life.

Dire consequences are also a reality for all the displaced people and refugees. Funding for civil society organizations, in particular women's organizations, must be given priority and all civil society organizations must be included and participate meaningfully in coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes at all levels.

We have heard harrowing testimonies of rape, torture and trafficking, confirmed by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. In that regard, we welcome the Framework of Cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

We urge rigorous and swift action with respect to accountability, investigations, prosecutions, compensation, reparations and service provision that is survivor-centred, rights-based and trauma-informed. Once again, sexual violence has become a feature of war. We cannot fail to investigate and prosecute such crimes. We cannot tolerate impunity for sexual violence in conflict.

We call for safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access and corridors to anyone in need across Ukraine. We commend the United Nations, its related agencies and all humanitarian workers, who are working on the ground in an extremely difficult operational environment and taxing conditions.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed renewed and prolonged attacks on Kyiv and other cities. Along with the suffering inflicted on the civilian population, we reiterate our concern about respect for international humanitarian law and hope that those attacks will cease immediately. The documented provenance of the unmanned aerial vehicle systems used in those attacks raises serious concerns that need to be addressed.

Equally, I reiterate that indiscriminate attacks and attacks on critical infrastructure must stop. It is the responsibility of the Council and all its members to uphold the Charter of the United Nations and international law, without exception.

In conclusion, we welcome Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo's positive update with regard to the ongoing contacts on prisoners of war and progress on the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and we call upon the Russian Federation to cease all hostilities and take concrete steps towards solving contentious issues through dialogue and diplomacy in ways that are consistent with the United Nations Charter.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would also like to join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing and extend my welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Dzhaparova, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, and His Excellency Mr. Gerwel, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, and I thank them for their participation.

Since February, the Council has met over the war in Ukraine more than 40 times. Our discussions have covered virtually every reason to abhor modern warfare — from the threat of nuclear confrontation to the plight of children in conflict. Each passing day last

year added to the urgency of a cessation of hostilities and the necessity of a negotiated settlement. Yet one fighting season has yielded to another as this terrible war continues.

Today nearly 40 per cent of Ukraine's population needs humanitarian aid. The ravages of war have not spared essential services either, while the onset of winter compounds civilian suffering, as we have heard. Donors and aid groups have responded with urgency, scaling up the delivery of essential services and providing thousands of generators in order to help people through the winter. Indeed, my country's aid programme has so far sent 2,500 generators as part of our ongoing humanitarian response to the conflict. But aid actors have also been caught in the crossfire. On 15 December, a humanitarian worker was killed while distributing food and, just a few days later, the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Donetsk was damaged by shelling.

This war has already killed at least 7,000 Ukrainian civilians and forced 15 million to flee their homes. In September, the World Bank estimated that Ukraine's reconstruction would cost around \$350 billion. That was before the widespread destruction of critical infrastructure, including power plants and the electricity grid.

Beyond Ukraine's borders, the war is contributing to turmoil in the global supply chain and food and energy markets and imposing unsustainable costs on countries in the global south. For low-income developing States, the conflict added to an already-difficult post-pandemic global economy, with rising prices and interest rates and significant inflationary pressures. Nearly 60 per cent of those countries now face a debt crisis. People far from the front lines in Ukraine are paying a price for this conflict. Meanwhile, the international system has had to confront the twin crises of function and principle. The war in Ukraine has risked entrenching global divisions to the point of paralysing multilateralism with the false choice of "with us or against us." At the same time, the challenges to the most foundational tenets of international law and the United Nations Charter could not be more explicit.

We all acknowledge that the war cannot go on for another year of lives lost and immense suffering. The United Arab Emirates has consistently held that there is no viable military solution. However, we acknowledge that, ultimately, it is the parties — Ukraine and the

Russian Federation — that must decide when and how they begin comprehensive talks. Still, the international community can and must do more to accelerate that process.

Through active and deliberate diplomacy, we must collectively work to prevent an escalation and expansion of the war. That includes minimizing the risk of a miscalculation. We must also preserve the space for positive interactions between the two sides, at the very least, to normalize engagement on key areas such as the export of grain and fertilizers, nuclear safety and security and respect for international humanitarian law. To encourage the parties to the negotiation table, we should also provide incentives in the form of a post-war vision that is just and sustainable.

In 2023, let us leverage the fact that we share a clear and urgent interest in bringing this war to a swift and peaceful end. Equally important, let all of our efforts drive at an inclusive and robust multilateralism, which is critical to addressing urgent global challenges, but also to safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, as well as the region's long-term security, stability and prosperity.

Today we must work for something more durable — a peace that holds and endures. We must begin to imagine the day after this war ends.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing and welcoming among us Her Excellency Ms. Dzhaporova, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, and His Excellency Mr. Gerwel, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

This is our first meeting on Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine since 9 December of last year (see S/PV.9216). Many of us have spent the time since then resting, recuperating, celebrating with family and preparing for the New Year. Russia has spent that time bombing civilians, attacking Ukraine's critical infrastructure and attempting to seize Ukrainian territory, as it did for most of last year. They have continued to do that with the assistance of Belarus and using weapons sourced from Iran and North Korea, in violation of Security Council resolutions and with utter contempt for the Council.

Millions of Ukrainians spent the holiday period sheltering from missile and drone attacks, sitting in the dark and the cold and living as refugees, displaced

persons and prisoners, many of them thousands of miles away from their homes, families and loved ones.

As the Secretary-General said yesterday (see S/PV.9241), this war has created a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe, traumatized a generation of children and accelerated the global food and energy crisis. As a result, millions across the world are facing another year of hunger and hardship.

As many of us have said repeatedly, Russia can choose to end all this immediately by stopping its attacks against Ukraine — not just for 36 hours, but for good — and by withdrawing its forces from Ukraine. While Russia's assault continues, however, Ukraine has no choice but to exercise its right to defend itself. But, like the rest of us, what Ukraine wants is a just and sustainable peace. We welcome and support Ukraine's initiative to that end.

We join the international community in again calling for an end to the war that respects Ukraine's rights under international law and the United Nations Charter, so that this year may be a year of peace.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing.

It is truly regrettable that we have to repeat what we and other Member States have said many times before on various occasions. However, we are compelled to articulate our position once again.

Japan condemns in the strongest terms Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which is a clear and flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations by a permanent member of the Security Council, which is supposed to bear the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression, withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from Ukraine and respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the series of General Assembly resolutions and the International Court of Justice order on provisional measures.

We also condemn Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure and cities across Ukraine. Innocent civilians in Ukraine, including children, have been

exposed to strikes — even during the New Year holidays. The destruction of energy infrastructure has seriously aggravated the humanitarian situation in the harsh winter. Any continuation of those attacks is completely unacceptable. We recall that indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilian populations constitute a war crime. We underline that there can be no impunity for war crimes and other atrocities, including sexual and gender-based violence. The international community must hold to account those responsible in accordance with international law.

We strongly condemn the transfer of unmanned aerial vehicles from Iran to Russia. We would support efforts by the Secretariat to investigate the potential use of Iranian drones by Russia in its war against Ukraine, in accordance with resolution 2231 (2015). We also strongly condemn Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and its seizure and militarization of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. We fully support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure nuclear safety and security at the plant.

Japan reaffirms its commitment to playing its part in shielding vulnerable countries that are severely impacted by the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as its weaponization of energy and food. We welcome the agreement by all the parties to continue cooperation on the Black Sea Grain Initiative and reiterate our respect for the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres and Türkiye in that regard. We strongly urge the relevant countries to continue to steadily implement that initiative.

Unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force shake the very foundation of the international order based on the rule of law and must not occur in any corner of the globe. Member States reaffirmed such principles at yesterday's open debate (see S/PV.9241). Japan renews its full resolve to continue its assistance to support Ukraine's defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will stand firmly with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine.

Ms. Dzhaparova (Ukraine): I would like to start by expressing my immense appreciation to everyone who has expressed support to Ukraine in the fight not only

for its existence but also for the existence of the whole world — based on rules, order, international law and respect for the most fundamental principles, such as territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as human dignity and freedom.

I regret that evil's messenger is still here — in the seat of a permanent member of the Security Council — the seat of the Soviet Union. Its representatives constantly poison the discussions held here and cynically lie to all of us. I reiterate what my country's delegation has already pointed out: the legal grounds for such a presence are more than dubious, if not absent.

Since the Security Council's previous meeting on Russia's war against Ukraine (see S/PV.9208), the situation on the ground has further deteriorated. The active front line with Russia is 1,500 kilometres long, and the total combat line spans 4,000 kilometres. Ukraine has been turned into the world's largest minefield, covering 175,000 square kilometres. The majority of Russia's missile and drone attacks — 62 per cent of all strikes — have been directed at civilian infrastructure. Thousands of residential buildings, houses, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, museums, religious buildings, electricity grids, water grids, railways and markets have been either destroyed or heavily damaged.

More than 7 million of my compatriots, mostly women and children, have been roaming all around the globe, separated from their homes and families. More than 7 million additional Ukrainians have become internally displaced persons (IDPs), on top of the 1.5 million people who — like myself when I left my home in Crimea — had already become IDPs as of 2014.

Today the battle for Donbas is at its height. The cities of Bahkmut and Soledar are now the major hotspots of the military action. What happens there surpasses the most horrific pictures of the First and Second World Wars. There are ruins instead of residential buildings, emptiness and dead bodies instead of joyful crowds, charred tree trunks instead of forests and moon-like surfaces instead of grain fields. It is our shared responsibility to restore peace and justice, make every provision of the Charter of the United Nations operational and guarantee a safe and prosperous future for our children, grandchildren and all generations to come. That is our historic mission and the legacy that we will all leave together.

My President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has initiated a peace formula to meet the pressing challenges of

the world. It consists of 10 points that will enable us to restore security and justice to Ukraine and the entire world. The formula, which is quite simple, is based on the purposes and principles of the Charter. As we all see, Russia's war impacts the entire world, because today our States and peoples are very much interconnected. When Russia destroys grain fields and farms in Ukraine, families from many countries in need suffer from food shortages and poverty. Our peace formula is therefore aimed at ensuring security in all its dimensions — with respect to food security, radiation safety, nuclear safety, energy security and countering ecocide — and preventing such aggression from being repeated in the future. We all need to develop enhanced security guarantees in order to ensure that this tragedy will never recur. We call on all responsible nations to facilitate and promote the peace formula plan.

We should also be united in strengthening our further pressure on Russia to destroy its war machine. Even though it denies it, the aggressor State has already felt the impact of sanctions. Its invading army is running out of modern weapons and ammunition. And although we have not won yet, Russia has already lost. For its final defeat and for our democracies to achieve victory, further joint action is needed. In that regard, my message is very clear: we need to reinforce sanctions in sectors of particular economic importance to Russia. A full oil and gas embargo, as well as the disconnection of Russian banks from the global financial system, is the price the aggressor State should pay.

As Russia finds itself in total isolation, it hastily intensifies its ties with other pariahs, with Moscow irresponsibly getting them ever-more involved in its bloody war. We cannot allow those who assist Russia in committing its horrific war crimes to avoid responsibility. That also applies to Belarus, which hypocritically denies its actual participation in the war, and Iran, which supplies drones to Russia, which continue to represent an indispensable means for implementing Russia's missile-terror strategy.

More than once, Ukraine has officially requested the Secretary-General and the Secretariat to send experts to Ukraine to investigate Iran's supplies of unmanned aerial vehicles to Russia. Today I reiterate that request and hope that the mission will be dispatched as soon as possible, because the delay undermines the credibility of the Security Council, as well as its ability to ensure the implementation of its own decisions, in particular resolution 2231 (2015).

Our efforts to restore peace and security cannot be complete without steps to ensure justice. That is why it is a matter of paramount importance to establish a special tribunal to hold Russian war criminals accountable. In almost 11 months, the aggressor State has already committed more than 64,000 registered war crimes. And I dread to think how many more mass graves — like those discovered in Bucha, Izyum and Lyman — will be discovered after the full liberation of our territories. Those terrifying crimes would not be possible without the so-called mother of crimes — the crime of aggression — which started in my native Crimea in 2014.

I would like to share with the Council a personal story of mine dating from March 2014, when I lived in Crimea and was a journalist travelling the entire peninsula to collect evidence of Russia's crime of aggression. We were to be briefed by the Secretary-General's special envoy, Dutch ambassador Robert Serry, and he was not there for two hours. The rumour was that he had been kidnapped — seized by the so-called self-defence guys. And I was actually the first one to find him, in one of the cafeterias in the centre of Simferopol, and I acted as a communicator between him and the Russian Federal Security Service. He was given an ultimatum to leave Crimea as soon as possible. The last thing he relayed to me when we were together at the airport in Simferopol — because we were taken there by the Russian Federal Security Service in a convoy by fully equipped people — was that he would report all of the details of the issues with his travel to the Secretary-General, because he was not able to exercise his mandate.

And that is exactly what has been happening. While Russia has been declaring its openness to give full access to international delegations and monitoring missions — for instance in Olenivka — it has in fact not opened itself up to monitoring because it dreams of hiding its own crimes. In the case of Olenivka, for our part, we have of course given all the necessary guarantees for such access and a fact-finding mission. We regret that Russia failed to do so.

The International Criminal Court in The Hague, which is investigating Russia's crimes against Ukraine, does not have sufficient jurisdiction and power to prosecute Russia's aggression. We therefore believe that the only way to restore justice is through the establishment of an international mechanism or a special tribunal. The Council's support of the relevant

draft resolution is a sign of hope for every single Ukrainian whose life has been dramatically affected by Russia's war.

My next point is dedicated to defence assistance and weapons. Air defence systems are still a top priority, as Russia continues its missile terror across Ukraine. As a result, almost half of our energy infrastructure is damaged. Millions of Ukrainians have to spend their evenings and nights by candlelight, because they have no electricity.

For its part — even as it is under unprecedented attack — Ukraine continues to share not only values and dignity, but also very practical things, such as its Grain from Ukraine initiative. And I thank the United Nations and a number of our partners for supporting that humanitarian initiative of my President.

It is clear that there is no room for compromise with evil, because if Ukraine stops fighting, it will die. The world as we know it will die. If Russia stops its aggression, the war will end. It is as simple as that.

However, even after the victory, there will be many challenges to address. According to our most recent estimates, the total amount of damage caused to Ukraine's civil and critical infrastructure exceeds \$127 billion. Ukraine's recovery will be one of the largest investment projects. Ukraine has now become Europe's biggest construction site, providing a wide range of opportunities for international partners to implement the best practices in the areas of engineering, construction and technology transfer. The sooner Ukraine recovers, the sooner it can again fully focus, as a reliable partner and active contributor, on resolving global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, poverty, conflicts and many others that affect the daily lives of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

Everyday life for people in Ukraine today looks exactly like what the United Nations has committed itself to countering and overcoming: there is war and insecurity, a lack of access to basic things such as water and electricity, poverty and environmental degradation. Life in my country may seem unimaginable for many — cooking with firewood, saving water in plastic bottles to drink, wash dishes and flush the toilet, reading and doing homework by candlelight, doing laundry in a basin, having to take a healthy walk of 20 floors or more instead of using the elevator, sleeping dressed in a coat, hat and gloves, and hiding from bombs in the

shelters. Those are problems facing many vulnerable countries that the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Summit of the Future are supposed to address.

I could keep on reflecting on the medieval lifestyle in Ukraine, but my main point is completely different. You can hardly find anyone complaining, in my country. Everyone is like a Ukrainian soldier in the trenches. We manifest dignity despite all the threats and inconveniences. We live our lives with dignity, cherishing our unity and ability to resist, cheering each other up with words of love and support, sharing food, clothing and candles, mourning our heroes and rejoicing over our newborns. And we are happy to see people in the streets. I even feel happy in a traffic jam. Can anyone imagine feeling happy in a traffic jam? We are now becoming experts on generators. And our most common New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve wish to each other was victory.

The victory of Ukraine is not only the greatest wish of millions of my compatriots who — dare I say — are standing against neocolonialism and the restoration of empire and have been fighting for the country's independence, with no more fear. It is also the common goal of those who understand that if a bigger country attacks a smaller country, no one in this Chamber — and therefore no one in their respective countries — can feel secure. However, we can ensure that security by working together shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand and heart to heart. We can make it.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Gerwel (Poland): Poland commends Japan for convening today's important meeting. Let me express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your statement, and to Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing and valuable insights. I also thank Her Excellency Ms. Emine Dzhaparova for her statement and testimony about the dignity of the Ukrainian people, which she so eloquently evoked.

With each and every day of its aggression against Ukraine, Russia is breaking the most basic rules and principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other historic documents. We are obliged to repeat that plain fact over and over again, even though it falls on the deaf ears of the aggressor. Today I would like to make three points regarding the current situation in Ukraine.

First, I wish to assure the Security Council that Poland will continue to act as the assistance hub for Ukraine as long as it is necessary. We have been proud to offer our goodwill services to Ukraine and Ukrainians since day one of Russia's invasion. In addition to offering shelter to millions of Ukrainian refugees, Poland continues to provide and facilitate transfers of multidimensional aid, in addition to hosting several hundred humanitarian workers from more than a dozen of United Nations agencies and international organizations. We are the main support gateway for Ukraine, and it is our intention to continue in that particular role as long as it is required.

Secondly, I would like to inform the Council about the conclusions of the Lublin triangle summit of the Presidents of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania, which took place in Lviv, Ukraine, just two days ago. In their joint declaration, the three leaders underlined, among other things, their full support for the creation, in accordance with the principles of international law, of an ad hoc international tribunal for the crime of aggression committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Presidents also voiced their support for the convening of the global peace formula summit on the initiative of Ukraine in order to consolidate international support, as presented by President Zelenskyy. Poland and Lithuania also reconfirmed their strong advocacy for Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic perspective.

Last but not least, my final point is an appeal to the members of the Security Council and the entire international community. It is my duty to express in this Chamber Poland's concern about the role of Belarus in the Kremlin's strategy regarding Ukraine. By now, we already know that Minsk is politically and practically supporting Russia's aggression. Moreover, Russia's accelerating military build-up in Belarus, including the recently announced Russia-Belarus military drills to be conducted between 16 January and 1 February, should ring additional alarm bells. I do not have to remind anybody here that the deployment of Russian troops and military equipment in Belarus just 12 months ago was a prelude to the full-scale invasion we have witnessed since 24 February 2022. The concentration of troops in our region is a negative development of which we have taken note. We should therefore make clear to Belarus that it can still reverse its course and make the right choice. Minsk has to be conscious that its further active involvement in the invasion will be met with a firm response by the international community.

Let us make every effort to prevent a further escalation of the conflict and use all the available tools to establish the just peace for which Ukraine strives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Mr. Paulauskas (Lithuania): I deliver this statement on behalf of the Baltic States — Estonia, Latvia and my own country, Lithuania.

I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for her briefing, and the Japanese presidency for the opportunity to address the Security Council.

Today's date is symbolic for us because, on 13 January in Lithuania, we commemorate Freedom Defenders Day. On that day in 1991, the Lithuanian people, myself included, stood unarmed against Soviet tanks in order to defend Lithuania's independence and freedom. Each year, we the Baltic States commemorate all the victims who died in the fight for our independence from the Soviet empire and continue to stand with Ukraine today, defending not only its freedom but also our own.

We are fast approaching a morbid milestone: the one-year anniversary of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. As we speak, Russian troops continue systematic and massive attacks on civilians, engage in the deliberate destruction of Ukraine's vital infrastructure and commit horrible war crimes in the country on a daily basis. That clearly demonstrates the brutality and desperation of Russia's regime. If it is not stopped, Russia will continue to threaten the rules-based international order and pursue its imperialist and colonial ambitions to retain Ukraine in its sphere of influence.

If Russia is not stopped, countries around the world will continue to experience the consequences of the war, including through acute food and energy insecurity. We reiterate that Russia is solely responsible for those hardships given that it started the war of aggression, in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and its key principles. Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia fully support Ukraine's initiative on the establishment of the special tribunal for the punishment of the crime of aggression against Ukraine. There must be no impunity for Russia's crimes committed on Ukrainian soil.

We commend the people of Ukraine for their admirable courage in defending their country, as well as the international legal order and the Charter.

The international community must continue to do everything possible to help Ukraine to win the war and get through the winter, including by urgently providing specialized energy equipment and helping to repair destroyed energy infrastructure.

The Baltic States will continue to provide support to address the impact of Russia's systemic and deliberate attacks on Ukraine's energy sector, in addition to other official assistance. Our countries are among the largest supporters of Ukraine per capita — together they have provided more than €1.3 billion in official assistance to Ukraine since February 2022, excluding private initiatives. We have assisted vulnerable communities in conflict-torn Eastern European regions for the past eight years and, since last February, have scaled up our assistance to meet the massive and urgent relief and protection needs of civilians across the Ukraine.

In order to help the Ukrainian people to get through the winter, our Governments, civil society and private companies have already sent significant amounts of equipment to Ukraine, including power generators, power transformers and spare parts. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the European Union will continue to take the work forward on the options for using frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine's reconstruction and for the purposes of reparation, in line with international law. We must ensure that the principle of "the aggressor pays the damage" is fully implemented in practice.

The Baltic States support all meaningful efforts to bring Russia's war of aggression to an end. We welcome the 10-step peace formula proposed by the President of Ukraine, which we consider a sound basis for achieving peace in Ukraine. Any solution to Russia's aggression against Ukraine must ensure that Ukraine's voice is heard and that its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders are respected. As the international community, we must continue to demand every single day that Russia stop this brutal aggression. Our position is clear: we will support Ukraine and defend the principles of the Charter of the United Nations as long as it is necessary. We are confident that Ukraine will prevail, as powerfully conveyed to us today by First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Ms. Emine Dzhaparova.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro,

Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the potential candidate country Georgia; as well as Norway and Andorra, align themselves with this statement.

As everyone else has done, I would like to thank Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo for her briefing, as well as you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to say a few words on this very important topic.

First, I want to acknowledge and pay tribute to the participation and testimony today of the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine. I think that she has made an incredibly powerful statement about how the struggle of the Ukrainian people is, and should be, the struggle of every free country and every Member of the United Nations.

Russia has decided to violate one of the most basic principles of international law and launch a fully-fledged war of aggression against its neighbour, a fellow Member of our Organization. The courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people in their darkest hour inspired the world and we came together, including here at the United Nations, to condemn that unprovoked aggression and defend the Charter of the United Nations. In 2023, not even two weeks into the new year, Russia continues its brutal attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure in the midst of winter. Therefore, in response, we must continue to stand together with Ukraine and in defence of the founding principles of the Organization. We call on everyone, as members of the Security Council, to assume their responsibility to uphold the Charter and to defend international peace and security.

Today, as Russia's onslaught against the people of Ukraine persists, I would like to highlight three points: first, the need to protect civilians; secondly, the importance of accountability; and thirdly, our support for all meaningful initiatives towards establishing a just peace.

First, the Members of the United Nations are bound by international law to protect civilians. Russia's ongoing campaign of systematic air strikes against civilian targets and critical infrastructure in Ukraine must stop. Those cruel, inhumane attacks only aim to increase human suffering and deprive the Ukrainian people and emergency services of electricity, heating and water. Attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure add to the growing evidence that Russia has committed war crimes, as reported by the

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine.

The EU has intensified its provision of humanitarian aid and civil-protection assistance and its support for the restoration of Ukraine's critical infrastructure in order to help Ukraine get through the winter. We have also responded with additional restrictive measures against Russia, as well as Iran, in response to the delivery of drones and their deadly deployment in Russia's war of aggression.

We again call on Russia to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas under its temporary control, as well as to persons detained by Russia and those forcibly transferred to Russia. The contamination resulting from the landmines and remnants of war left behind by Russia's armed forces not only poses a serious obstacle to relief and aid-delivery efforts but also poses a serious threat to the lives of civilians, in particular children.

Secondly, there can be no impunity. Russia's war has brought death and destruction to its neighbour. The EU welcomes all efforts to ensure full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes in connection with Russia's war, including ways to secure accountability for the crime of aggression. Russia must bear the legal consequences for all violations of international law, and accountability — in its broadest sense — must be ensured, including victims' rights to truth and reparations, as well as guarantees of non-repetition.

We support the investigations by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The EU also reiterates the order of the International Court of Justice, of March of last year, for Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine. We call on Russia to comply with that legally binding order, and we will continue to support Ukraine in the framework of the proceedings of the International Court of Justice.

Thirdly, we support all meaningful efforts to bring an end to Russia's war. The path to peace is for the aggressor to withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stand ready to support Ukraine's initiative for a just peace. To date, Russia has not shown any genuine willingness for a fair and sustainable peace in line with the Charter of the Organization or international law. Russian troops have continued their relentless air strikes against civilians,

using cold and hunger as weapons of war. It has blocked any meaningful action by the Security Council to react to all those crimes.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the EU's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will continue to stand with Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes. We will continue to increase the collective pressure on Russia,

together with our international partners, to end its war of aggression and to withdraw its troops. And we will continue to be at the forefront of global efforts to address all the global consequences of the Russian aggression. We count on the members of the Security Council to do the same.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.